


		NTSB ID: DCA97MA016		Aircraft Registration Number: N827AX	
		Occurrence Date: 12/22/1996		Most Critical Injury: Fatal	
		Occurrence Type: Accident		Investigated By: NTSB	
Location/Time					
Nearest City/Place NARROWS		State VA	Zip Code 22124	Local Time 1810	Time Zone EST
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip		Distance From Landing Facility:		Direction From Airport:	
Aircraft Information Summary					
Aircraft Manufacturer Douglas		Model/Series DC-8-63F		Type of Aircraft Airplane	
Sightseeing Flight: No			Air Medical Transport Flight: No		
Narrative					
<p>Brief narrative statement of facts, conditions and circumstances pertinent to the accident/incident:</p> <p>On December 22, 1996, at about 1810 eastern standard time (est), a Douglas DC-8-63F, N827AX, operated by Airborne Express personnel on a test flight, impacted mountainous terrain in the vicinity of Narrows, Virginia. The three flightcrew members and three maintenance/avionics technicians on board the airplane received fatal injuries. The airplane was destroyed by impact forces and post crash fire. Instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) prevailed for the night flight, which operated on an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan. The local test flight operated under Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 91, and originated from Greensboro, North Carolina at approximately 1740 est.</p> <p>The airplane required a functional check flight (FCF) following major modifications and "C" check inspections at a Greensboro (GSO) Part 145 repair station. A portion of the FCF was accomplished on December 21, 1996; however, the flight was terminated at GSO due to low hydraulic quantity. Following some delay for ground maintenance activity, the FCF was resumed the following day. The airplane departed GSO about 1740 local time on a 14 CFR 91 IFR flight plan filed back to GSO. Following climbout, the flightcrew was assigned a block altitude of 13,000 to 15,000 feet mean sea level (msl). The airplane was observed on air traffic control (ATC) radar to depart the floor of the assigned altitude block at low speed. ATC inquired if the flight had an emergency, and the flightcrew responded in the affirmative and that they were descending through 8,000 feet. There was no further radio contact. Evidence from the CVR and FDR indicated that the descent was related to operations associated with the flight test profile rather than a structures or systems anomaly. The airplane descended at a higher than normal rate and struck local mountainous terrain at about 3400 feet msl.</p>					
FACTUAL REPORT - AVIATION					

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Landing Facility/Approach Information					
Airport Name	Airport ID:	Airport Elevation Ft. MSL	Runway Used 0	Runway Length	Runway Width
Runway Surface Type:					
Runway Surface Condition:					
Type Instrument Approach:					
VFR Approach/Landing:					
Aircraft Information					
Aircraft Manufacturer Douglas		Model/Series DC-8-63F		Serial Number 45901	
Airworthiness Certificate(s): Transport					
Landing Gear Type: Retractable - Tricycle					
Homebuilt Aircraft? No	Number of Seats: 3	Certified Max Gross Wt.	353000 LBS	Number of Engines: 4	
Engine Type: Turbo Fan	Engine Manufacturer: P&W	Model/Series: JT3D-7	Rated Power: 19000 LBS		
- Aircraft Inspection Information					
Type of Last Inspection Continuous Airworthiness	Date of Last Inspection	Time Since Last Inspection 2 Hours	Airframe Total Time 62800 Hours		
- Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) Information					
ELT Installed?	ELT Operated?	ELT Aided in Locating Accident Site?			
Owner/Operator Information					
Registered Aircraft Owner ABX AIR INC		Street Address			
		City	State OH	Zip Code	
Operator of Aircraft Same as Reg'd Aircraft Owner		Street Address Same as Reg'd Aircraft Owner			
		City	State	Zip Code	
Operator Does Business As: AIRBORNE EXPRESS			Operator Designator Code: ABXA		
- Type of U.S. Certificate(s) Held:					
Air Carrier Operating Certificate(s): Flag Carrier/Domestic					
Operating Certificate:			Operator Certificate:		
Regulation Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation					
Type of Flight Operation Conducted:					
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		Occurrence Type: Accident			
First Pilot Information					
Name		City		State	Date of Birth
On File		On File		On File	Age
					48
Sex: M	Seat Occupied: Right	Principal Profession: Civilian Pilot		Certificate Number: On File	
Certificate(s): Airline Transport; Commercial; Flight Engineer					
Airplane Rating(s): Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land					
Rotorcraft/Glider/LTA:					
Instrument Rating(s): Airplane					
Instructor Rating(s): None					
Type Rating/Endorsement for Accident/Incident Aircraft? Yes				Current Biennial Flight Review? 07/1996	
Medical Cert.: Class 1		Medical Cert. Status: Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.		Date of Last Medical Exam: 09/1996	
- Flight Time Matrix	All A/C	This Make and Model	Airplane Single Engine	Airplane Multi-Engine	Night
Total Time	8087	869			
Pilot In Command(PIC)					
Instructor					
Last 90 Days	34				
Last 30 Days					
Last 24 Hours					
Seatbelt Used? Yes		Shoulder Harness Used? Yes		Toxicology Performed? Yes	
				Second Pilot? Yes	
Flight Plan/Itinerary					
Type of Flight Plan Filed: IFR					
Departure Point		State	Airport Identifier	Departure Time	Time Zone
GREENSBORO		NC	GSO	0000	
Destination		State	Airport Identifier		
Local Flight					
Type of Clearance: IFR					
Type of Airspace: Class E					
Weather Information					
Source of Briefing:					
Company					
Method of Briefing:					


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Weather Information					
WOF ID	Observation Time	Time Zone	WOF Elevation	WOF Distance From Accident Site	Direction From Accident Site
BLF	1807	EST	2857 Ft. MSL	20 NM	260 Deg. Mag.
Sky/Lowest Cloud Condition: Unknown				Ft. AGL	Condition of Light: Night/Dark
Lowest Ceiling: Overcast			4000 Ft. AGL	Visibility: 7 SM	Altimeter: 30.00 "Hg
Temperature: 4 °C		Dew Point: 3 °C	Wind Direction: 270		Density Altitude: Ft.
Wind Speed: 4		Gusts:	Weather Conditions at Accident Site: Instrument Conditions		
Visibility (RVR): Ft.		Visibility (RVV) SM	Intensity of Precipitation:		
Restrictions to Visibility:					
Type of Precipitation: Rain Showers					

Accident Information					
Aircraft Damage: Destroyed		Aircraft Fire: Ground		Aircraft Explosion: Ground	
Classification: U.S. Registered/U.S. Soil					
- Injury Summary Matrix	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	TOTAL
First Pilot	1				1
Second Pilot	1				1
Student Pilot					
Flight Instructor					
Check Pilot					
Flight Engineer	1				1
Cabin Attendants					
Other Crew	3				3
Passengers					
- TOTAL ABOARD -	6				6
Other Ground	0	0	0		0
- GRAND TOTAL -	6	0	0		6

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Administrative Information		
Investigator-In-Charge (IIC) ROBERT MACINTOSH		
Additional Persons Participating in This Accident/Incident Investigation: JOE MANNO WASHINGTON, DC		
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